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TAGS: [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#)

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTION REVIEW SHOULD BE DELAYED SAYS SUNNI  
HARD-LINE LEADER MUTLAK

REF: BAGHDAD 150

Classified By: PolCouns Robert Ford, reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Saleh Mutlak, whose National Iraqi Front (NIF) won eleven seats in the December 15 elections, told Poloff on January 18 that Constitutional reform should be put off until the next Council of Representatives. The country cannot focus on the Constitution until there is security - the violence must stop, he said. Mutlak is recommending that the formation of the Constitutional Review Committee, along with the timetable for key legislation concerning federalism, be put off until the next term of the National Assembly, when the country is stable. He claimed violence would erupt after the final election results are announced since most Sunni Arabs consider the elections to have been fraught with fraud that deprived them of many seats. (Comment: we think there is some hyperbole here. End Comment.)

[¶2.](#) (C) Poloff strongly cautioned Mutlak on his public statements, in which he is quoted as saying that he supports the insurgency. Such statements, said Poloff, anger the Shia and convince them that Sunni Arabs are not suitable partners in governing Iraq. The USG must also condemn statements that appear to justify the killing of Coalition troops. As an elected member of a legitimate government, Mutlak cannot be advocating violence against it. Mutlak denied that he supports the insurgency, claiming that he has been misquoted in the media. Instead, he said, he is urging the insurgents to fight Iranians and not the Coalition. He promised to issue statements condemning violence and calling on the insurgents to stop attacks against the Coalition.

[¶3.](#) (C) Mutlak has been meeting recently with political leaders in an attempt to forge a governing coalition with the Kurds, Sunnis and the Allawi camp. He candidly admitted that there are no current negotiations between the Sunnis and the Allawi camp. They have no common platform, says Mutlak. The Sunni Tawaffuq is a Sunni religious party - like the Shia and Kurds, another sectarian group. Attempting to position himself as a acceptable moderate secular leader, Mutlak has met with Shia SCIRI leader Abdul Azziz Hakim and Kurd President Talabani to pitch his candidacy for President or Prime Minister. He said he was angry that both attacked him publicly afterwards saying he doesn't understand why they did that.

[¶4.](#) (C) Comment: Saleh Mutlak is a firebrand whose provocative public statements in the election campaign have escalated the political tension and perhaps contributed to the hardening of positions in both the

Shia and Sunni camps. They may also have led to an increase in violence. Breaking from the Iraq National Dialogue Council before the December 15 election to form his National Iraqi Front, he did reasonably well, apparently winning about 11 seats. But his grandstanding and ego have irritated other Sunni Arab leaders, even within his current coalition (reftel), dimming his chances of emerging as a consensus candidate for any national position. End Comment.  
KHALILZAD